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Letter dated 20 September 2000 from the Permanent Representative of the Lao People's Democratic Republic to the United Nations and Chairman of the Group of Landlocked Developing Countries addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour, on behalf of the Group of Landlocked Developing Countries, to transmit to you herewith the ministerial communiqué adopted at the first ministerial meeting of the Group of Landlocked Developing Countries, held on Monday, 18 September 2000 at United Nations Headquarters (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 92 (a).

(*Signed*) Alounkeo **Kittikhoun**

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Annex to the letter dated 20 September 2000 from the Permanent Representative of the Lao People's Democratic Republic to the United Nations and Chairman of the Group of Landlocked Developing Countries addressed to the Secretary-General

Communiqué of the first ministerial meeting of the Group of Landlocked Developing Countries, held in New York, 18 September 2000

1. We, the Ministers of the Group of Landlocked Developing Countries, have gathered in New York during the Millennium Assembly of the United Nations for the first-ever ministerial meeting of the Group of Landlocked Developing Countries on the sidelines of the General Assembly session. On this occasion, we reaffirm our full and firm commitment to pursue a collective and constructive course of action at the United Nations and other relevant forums for the promotion and protection of our common interests, especially the free and unimpeded access to and from the sea, the reduction of transit transport costs and the development of adequate transit transport infrastructure and also to continue to seek genuine international and regional cooperation for enhanced competitiveness and accelerated growth, sustainable development and positive integration of our countries into the globalizing world economy.

2. We emphasize that, as a group, the landlocked developing countries, 16 of which are least developed countries, are among the poorest developing countries, with the lowest growth rates, and are typically heavily dependent on a very limited number of commodities for their export earnings. The development process of landlocked developing countries is severely handicapped by their geographical isolation and lack of access to territorial sea and the associated high cost of transport. Their remoteness and isolation from major world markets impose serious constraints on the overall socio-economic development of their countries. Effective resolution of the formidable problems faced by those countries requires serious consideration, at a high political level, of concerted national, regional and international policies and measures in their favour.

3. We welcome the United Nations Millennium Declaration of Heads of State and Government, adopted on 8 September 2000 at the Millennium Summit, in which our Heads of State and Government candidly recognized the special needs of landlocked developing countries, and we urge both bilateral and multilateral donors to increase financial and technical assistance to this Group of countries to meet their special development needs, and to help overcome the impediments of geographical handicap by improving their transit transport systems.

4. We express our fullest support to the holding of an international ministerial meeting on transit transport issues in 2003. We also welcome the generous offer of the Government of Kazakhstan to host the meeting. The meeting would provide an important opportunity to chart and adopt a collective action programme to further develop transit transport systems, giving appropriate emphasis to the problems of landlocked and transit developing countries, which would enable landlocked developing countries to effectively participate in the international trading system. We call upon all countries and relevant stakeholders to attach the greatest urgency and importance to this event. We consider subregional and regional meetings, as

appropriate, should be held prior to the ministerial meeting to exchange views on the subregional and regional dimensions of the transit transport cooperation and priority areas of concern.

5. We also underscore the need for full and effective implementation of the Global Framework for Transit Transport Cooperation between Landlocked and Transit Developing Countries and the Donor Community, which provides a comprehensive framework for action at the national, subregional and international levels designed to improve the efficiency of transit transport systems. The proposed ministerial meeting in 2003 should also make an assessment of the progress achieved in the implementation of the Global Framework at national, regional and global levels.

6. In the context of the ongoing processes of globalization and liberalization and major advances in information and communication technologies, we are deeply concerned about increasing marginalization of landlocked developing countries, despite our efforts to devise appropriate national strategies to achieve sustainable development. New measures for duty free and quota free access for our goods and services should be considered in the context of multilateral trade negotiations and other preferential arrangements, including extending Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) schemes to landlocked developing countries that are not least developed countries.

7. The development of transit transport infrastructure and its effective maintenance continue to be a major concern for landlocked developing countries. We are determined, in cooperation with our transit developing neighbours, as well as with the development partners and the private sector to give high priority to the development and effective maintenance of the transit transport infrastructure.

8. We stress the importance of the rationalizing of immigration, transport and customs policies, procedures and documentation as well as the legal framework governing transit trade. The simplification, harmonization and standardization of transit procedures as well as the application of information technologies should play an important role in enhancing the efficiency of transit systems. In this regard, we call upon the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, in cooperation with other relevant organizations and the donor community, to continue to assist landlocked developing countries and their transit neighbours in these areas.

9. We emphasize the role of subregional and regional arrangements in the development and management of transit transport systems for landlocked developing countries as part of a broader endeavour to develop viable transport corridors. There is a need to better coordinate the planning of transport sector programmes, not only in landlocked developing countries and their transit neighbours, but also where necessary on a wider regional basis.

10. We appeal to all States, international organizations and financial institutions to implement as a matter of urgency and priority, the specific actions related to the particular needs and problems of landlocked developing countries. We urge donor countries, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and multilateral financial and development institutions to provide landlocked and transit developing countries with greater financial and technical assistance in the form of grants or concessional loans for the construction, maintenance and improvement of their transport, storage and other transit-related facilities, including additional routes and

improved communication, and to promote subregional, regional and interregional projects and programmes in this area.

11. We emphasize that the needs and special problems of landlocked developing countries should be adequately addressed at the relevant upcoming global forums, such as the Third United Nations Conference on Least Developed Countries, the high-level international intergovernmental event on financing for development and reviews of major United Nations conferences, with a view to mobilizing international attention and support in favour of these countries.

12. We note with appreciation the contribution made by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, as the focal point within the United Nations system on the landlocked developing countries, to the formulation of policies and measures at different levels relating to the special problems of landlocked developing countries. We urge the organization, in collaboration with the other relevant parts of the United Nations system, to further expand its programme to support landlocked developing countries and their transit neighbours in their efforts to improve their transit transport systems. In this connection, we strongly underscore the need to strengthen the resource base of the organization in order to enable it to adequately carry out its mandate in this area.

13. We express our sincere appreciation to Mr. Somsavat Lengsavad, Deputy Prime Minister, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Lao People's Democratic Republic and his Government for the initiative to organize an annual ministerial meeting of the Group of Landlocked Developing Countries, in particular, for convening this first ministerial meeting of the Group during the fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly, and we encourage him to continue this excellent work on behalf of the Group.